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DIGITAL EDITION

Todd McFarlane & Image Comics Present

Benediction

Dedicated to Kevin Holguin

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SPAWN DARK AGES 5 SUMMARY:

A mysterious stranger arrives to tell a tale from the distant past: a tale of a life saved and a life owed. Chretien Du Sang de la Croix had fought in the Crusades, and although he once had saved Covenant's life, he believed in no cause other than his own. Du Sang was a greedy and treacherous hedonist who betrayed his fellow Crusaders, only to lose everything he valued. He shunned the world, and locked himself away in his castle, determined to live out his days in decadence. In a dream, Spawn shows Du Sang his fate, and pays back his debt by allowing him to keep the one thing that now matters least to him: his life.

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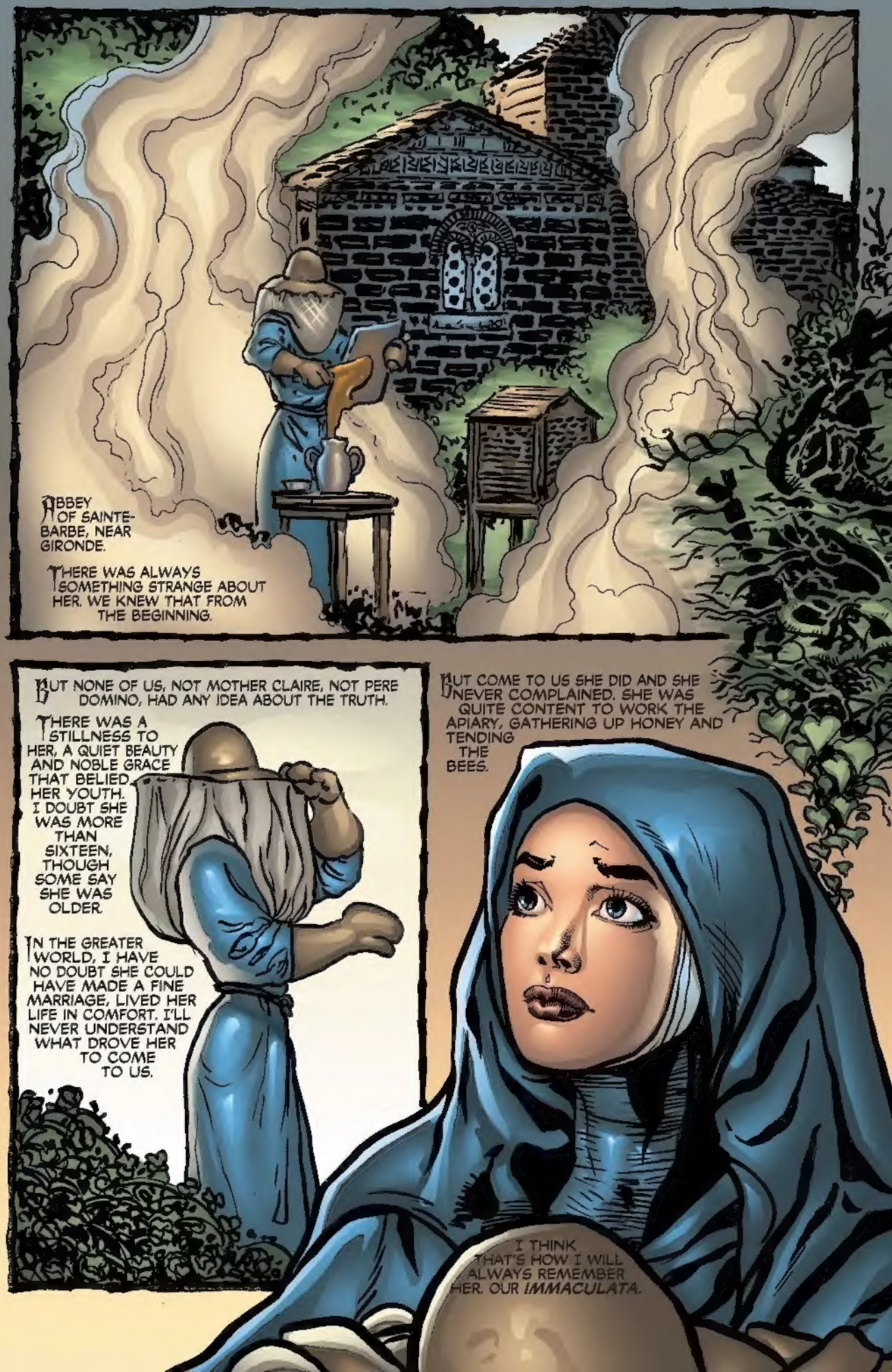
THE AQUITAINE, SOUTHERN FRANCE.
UUUFF!
YOU DISAPPOINT ME.
I SHALL ASK YOU ONCE AGAIN...

WHERE *IS* HE?
BY THE TEARS OF THE VIRGIN, I SWEAR I KNOW NOT OF WHAT YOU SPEAK.

I KNOW HE WAS HERE! THE BLACK KNIGHT. I HAVE TRACKED HIM TO THIS POX-RIDDEN COUNTY.
YOU SCARCELY HAVE ONE GASP OF BREATH LEFT IN YOU, DOG. I SUGGEST YOU USE IT TO TELL ME WHAT I WANT TO KNOW!
=HAUCK= I -- THERE WAS SOMEONE -- A STRANGER -- A DARK WARRIOR -- UFF -- BLOOD RED CLOAK --
WHERE?
I DON'T KNOW... HE PASSED BY... TWO DAYS AGO PERHAPS... THAT IS ALL I KNOW...
YOU WON'T ESCAPE ME, COVENANT.
CURSED MADMAN...


ABBEY OF SAINTE-BARBE, NEAR GIRONDE.
THERE WAS ALWAYS SOMETHING STRANGE ABOUT HER. WE KNEW THAT FROM THE BEGINNING.
BUT NONE OF US, NOT MOTHER CLAIRE, NOT PERE DOMINO, HAD ANY IDEA ABOUT THE TRUTH.
THERE WAS A STILLNESS TO HER, A QUIET BEAUTY AND NOBLE GRACE THAT BELIED HER YOUTH. I DOUBT SHE WAS MORE THAN SIXTEEN, THOUGH SOME SAY SHE WAS OLDER.
IN THE GREATER WORLD, I HAVE NO DOUBT SHE COULD HAVE MADE A FINE MARRIAGE, LIVED HER LIFE IN COMFORT. I'LL NEVER UNDERSTAND WHAT DROVE HER TO COME TO US.
BUT COME TO US SHE DID AND SHE NEVER COMPLAINED. SHE WAS QUITE CONTENT TO WORK THE APIARY, GATHERING UP HONEY AND TENDING THE BEES.
I THINK THAT'S HOW I WILL ALWAYS REMEMBER HER. OUR *IMMACULATA*.

CLANG CLANG CLANG
THERE WAS SOME SECRET THAT HELD HER IN ITS GRIP, SOMETHING WE COULD NOT GUESS AT.
HOW SOMEONE SO YOUNG, COULD KNOW SO MUCH, CARRY SO MUCH SORROW ON HER NARROW SHOULDERS...
BUT SHE WAS GOOD AND OBEDIENT AND SO VERY DEVOTED TO HER CALLING.
GOD WAS IN HER HEART EVERY MOMENT OF THE DAY.

"PATER NOSTER DOMINUS REX..."

IMMACULATA... IS THAT YOU, CHILD?
YES, ABBESS.
WHAT TROUBLES YOU SO, MY LITTLE LAMB? EVERY NIGHT YOU SNEAK OUT AND CAST YOURSELF DOWN ON THE COLD STONE FLOOR...
DEVOTION IS ONE THING, MY DEAR. OBSESSION IS QUITE ANOTHER.
I WANT TO BE PURE, ABBESS. THAT IS ALL...
AS DO WE ALL. WE ARE ALL THE BRIDES OF CHRIST HERE, AND WE SHOULD TAKE JOY IN OUR LOT. OUR EXISTENCE IS NOT A PUNISHMENT.
PERHAPS IF YOU TOOK MORE TIME TO--
:GASP: WHAT IN GOD'S NAME? GIRL... YOUR HANDS!
WHAT DOES IT MEAN, ABBESS? IS IT A SIGN?

REYNARD, I AM HUNGRY.
I KNOW, MY DEAR. I KNOW. BUT WE MUST COVER MORE GROUND BEFORE NIGHTFALL.
JUST A LITTLE FURTHER. HAVE FAITH, MARIE. GOD WILL PROVIDE.
WHAT HO! A RAGGED CROW AND A TIMID MOUSE. THIS SHALL MAKE FOR A BIT OF SPORT.
STAND ASIDE, BRIGANDS. WE ARE TOO POOR TO HOLD INTEREST FOR YOU.
REYNARD, BE CAREFUL.
AH... BUT THERE IS THE WOMAN.
SHE IS WITH CHILD. YOU ARE A LOW AND VILE MAN TO MAKE SUCH SUGGESTIONS.
LITTLE CROW, YOU SQUAWK MUCH!
AAAGH!

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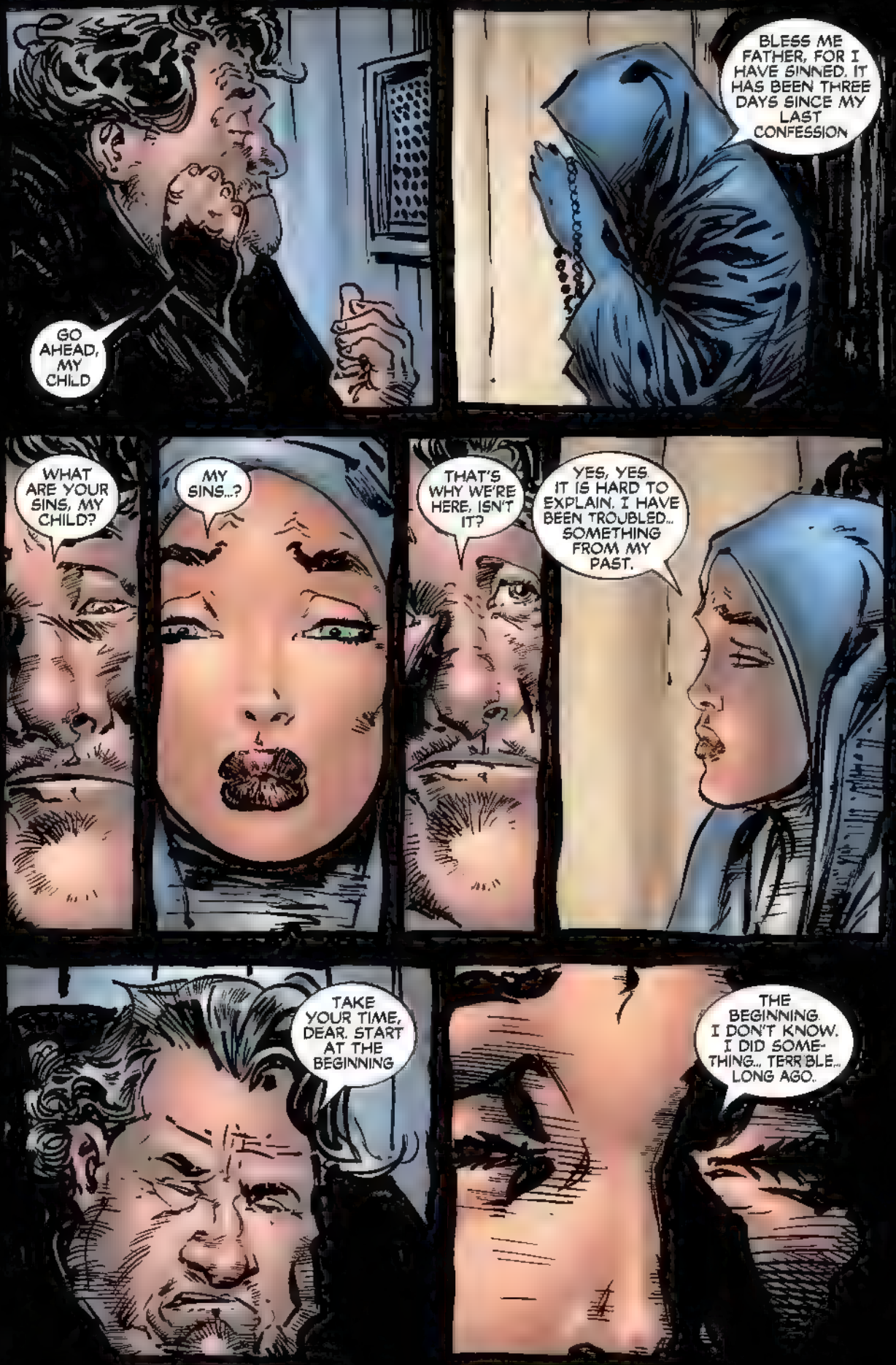
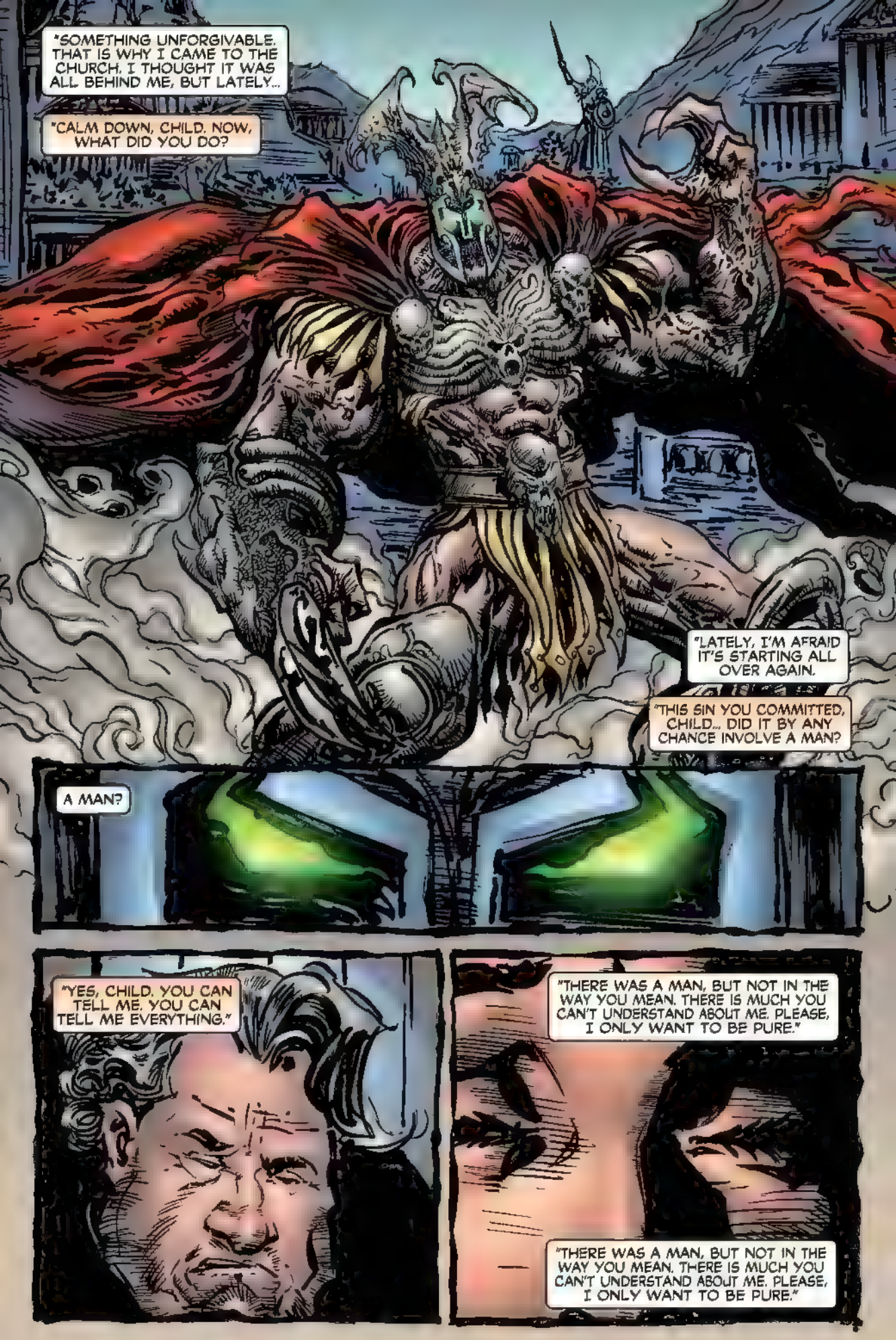
FAH! YOU ARE A LONG WAY FROM HOME, ENGLANDER.
YOU ARE MISTAKEN. I AM MY OWN MASTER. I CLAIM WHATEVER LAND LIES BENEATH MY FEET.
AND I BELIEVE THAT IT IS YOU GENTLEMEN WHO ARE TRESSPASSING!
GET HIM!

HAH!
UFF!
GERARD, LOOK OUT! UGHN!
AARGH!
HHHHMMPH
GGAH

YOU MAY GO ON YOUR WAY. I AM SORRY THE LADY HAD TO SEE THAT.
WE ARE WEARY AND HAVE NOT EATEN FOR DAYS. IF YOU COULD SPARE ANY FOOD...
THANK YOU, GOOD SIR. THANK YOU WE OWE YOU OUR LIVES.
REYNARD...
MILORD.. I HATE TO PRESUME, WE ARE SO VERY MUCH IN YOUR DEBT ALREADY.
BUT YOU SEE, MARIE HERE IS WITH CHILD. IT SHALL COME ANY DAY NOW.
HMMM.


GO AHEAD, MY CHILD
BLESS ME FATHER, FOR I HAVE SINNED. IT HAS BEEN THREE DAYS SINCE MY LAST CONFESSION
WHAT ARE YOUR SINS, MY CHILD?
MY SINS...?
THAT'S WHY WE'RE HERE, ISN'T IT?
YES, YES. IT IS HARD TO EXPLAIN. I HAVE BEEN TROUBLED... SOMETHING FROM MY PAST.
TAKE YOUR TIME, DEAR. START AT THE BEGINNING
THE BEGINNING. I DON'T KNOW. I DID SOMETHING... TERRIBLE... LONG AGO.


"SOMETHING UNFORGIVABLE. THAT IS WHY I CAME TO THE CHURCH. I THOUGHT IT WAS ALL BEHIND ME, BUT LATELY...
"CALM DOWN, CHILD. NOW, WHAT DID YOU DO?
"LATELY, I'M AFRAID IT'S STARTING ALL OVER AGAIN.
"THIS SIN YOU COMMITTED, CHILD... DID IT BY ANY CHANCE INVOLVE A MAN?
A MAN?
"YES, CHILD. YOU CAN TELL ME. YOU CAN TELL ME EVERYTHING."
"THERE WAS A MAN, BUT NOT IN THE WAY YOU MEAN. THERE IS MUCH YOU CAN'T UNDERSTAND ABOUT ME. PLEASE, I ONLY WANT TO BE PURE."
"THERE WAS A MAN, BUT NOT IN THE WAY YOU MEAN. THERE IS MUCH YOU CAN'T UNDERSTAND ABOUT ME. PLEASE, I ONLY WANT TO BE PURE."

SOMETHING IS HAPPENING TO ME. A CHANGE HAS COME OVER ME.. I DON'T THINK I CAN CONTROL IT...
YOU ARE A YOUNG GIRL, OF FLESH AND BLOOD. YOU ARE SUBJECT TO THE WHIMS OF NATURE, AS WE ALL ARE. NONE OF US ARE DIVINE.
MOTHER CLAIRE TELLS ME OF GIRLS WHO STARVE THEMSELVES TO RETARD THE CYCLES OF THEIR... WOMANHOOD. PERHAPS YOU COULD TRY THAT.
WHEN YOU ARE READY, YOU WILL TELL ME YOUR SECRETS. IT CANNOT BE AS BAD AS ALL THAT I HAVE MY OWN URGES TOO, TRUTH BE TOLD..
MERCY.

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THANK YOU AGAIN, MILORD, FOR YOUR GENEROSITY. I AM A MAN OF FEW WANTS, BUT EVEN THE HUMBLEST BELLY DEMANDS FOOD.
AS FOR MY SOUL, WELL, ET QUID ERAT, QUOD ME DELECTABAT, N.SI AMARE ET AMARI?
EQUID... WHAT?
WHAT HAVE I DELIGHTED IN, BUT TO LOVE, AND BE LOVED?
YOU ARE QUITE LEARNED, CLERGY?
NO, NOT AT ALL. I DON'T SUBSCRIBE TO THE HYPOCRISY OF ROME. I AM A SCHOLAR, A TEACHER. I WAS MARIE'S TUTOR, IN FACT.
UNTIL HER FATHER... WELL, LEAVE IT TO SAY THAT OUR LOVE IS WHY WE FIND OURSELVES IN SUCH SHALLOWS.
HE TURNED YOU OUT? IS YOU'RE WIFE'S FATHER SUCH A TYRANT?
OH, MARIE AND I ARE NOT MARRIED...

BUT WE ARE TOGETHER, IF YOU CATCH MY MEANING.
I UNDERSTAND. I MYSELF ONCE HAD... ATTACHMENTS... WITH A WOMAN BELOW MY STATION. HER NAME WAS SHIANN. WE PARTED ON BAD TERMS, I'M AFRAID.
WHAT DID YOU DO?
WHAT MEN DO WHEN THINGS GET DIFFICULT. I WENT TO WAR.
DID YOU NOT SEE HER AG~ AHH-AAHH.
REYNARD, THE CHILD, SHE STIRS!
BE CALM MY LOVE. GOD WILL PROVIDE.
THERE IS AN OLD ABBEY NOT A DAY'S RIDE FROM HERE. AT FIRST LIGHT, I WILL TAKE YOU.

FROM DARKEST HELL I HAVE RETURNED. YOUR CRIMES HAVE NOT BEEN FORGOTTEN, IMMACULATA!
YOU CANNOT HIDE FROM WHO YOU TRULY ARE!
HAAAH!

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NO... DEAR GOD... NO... NOT AGAIN...
NO!
NOOOO!

BY THE VIRGIN, WHAT IS THAT RACKET?
IT'S COMING FROM IMMACULATA'S CHAMBER.
CHILD, WHAT IS WRONG!
NOOOO!
OPEN THE DOOR, GIRL, LET ME IN!

IMMACULATA! CAN YOU HEAR ME?

DARKNESS